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AUTHOR Hepworth, H. Philip
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ABSTRACT

Although workers and scholars concerned with the evolution of child welfare services have general hunches about the forces influencing the directions of service development, they have not had available to them any systematic data to verify or correct their impressions. This article attempts to provide a basis for making judgments about the recent history of such services, potentially serving to indicate future directions and problems. The data presented here are intended to provide an overview of trends in Canadian child welfare services during the last 20 years. Based on recently collected material published in detail in the report entitled 'Foster Care and Adoption: A Baseline Study of Canadian Child Welfare Services 1959-77," the present material offers a summary of the relationship between demographic changes in the population of children between 1959 and 1977 and the evolution of child welfare services and governmental policies in response to those changes. Topics discussed include (1) demographic developments and child welfare services, (2) residential care, (3) foster care, (4) adoption services, (5) child welfare expenditures and resources, (6) long-term trends in the child welfare services, (7) preventive services, and (8) limitations of traditional approaches to service provision. (RH)

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CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVE

A revised version of a paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Conference of The Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, June 4-7, 1979, held in conjunction with the Learned Societies Conference at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada.

H. Philip Hepworth
Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Work
University of Regina

March, 1980.

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3. Canada Year Book, 1940, page 1029.

4. Canadian Council on Child Welfare Annual Report, 1939, page 45.

5. The 0-14 years age group was 3.2 million in 1941 (0-19 years, 4.3 million). In 1951 it was 4.2 million (0-19 years, 5.3 million). In 1961 it was 6.2 million (0-19 years, 7.6 million). In 1971 it was 6.4 million (0-19 years, 8.5 million). In 1977 it was 5.8 million (0-19 years, 8.2 million).

6. The illegitimate birth rate was 4.2 per cent in 1959 (4.1 in 1946), 9.6 per cent in 1970 and 9.0 per cent in 1973.

7. The child population continued to grow until the late 1960s, and reached a peak of 6.6 million aged 0-14 years in 1966, and 8.5 million aged 0-19 years in 1969. The age group 15-19 years is still at an all time peak today.

8. Information on the income of adopting families in Nova Scotia suggests a fairly even spread of incomes above and below the average level of incomes of families in Atlantic Canada. Other factors too may play a part in the popularity of adoption, since the growing number of marriages may lead to more childless families seeking adoptive children.

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CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Although workers and scholars concerned with the evolution of child welfare services have general hunches about the forces influencing the directions of service development, they have not had available to them any systematic data to verify or correct their impressions. This article attempts to provide a basis for making such judgments about the recent history of these services. It may also serve to indicate future directions and problems. The data presented here is intended to provide an overview of the baseline picture of trends in the Canadian child welfare services during the last twenty years and is based on recently collected material published in full detail in the author's report. Foster Care and Adoption: A Baseline Study of Canadian Child Welfare Services 1959-1977.[1] A major premise of the full study was that a national perspective on the child welfare services was lacking in Canada, and that without it major policy and research issues could not be addressed. It has previously been impossible to answer questions about the factors which dictated the level of activity within child welfare services. For example, have changes in the level and nature of social work activity depended on agency definition of services, factors related to staffing or changes in broader policies? Or, on the other hand, have demographic factors determined the level of services as a result of increase or decrease in the numbers of children needing care? This material presents a summary of the relationship between the demographic changes in the population of children between 1959 and 1977 and the evolution of child welfare services and governmental policies in response to those changes.

The data are based on the annual reports and unpublished statistics of the provincial departments of welfare and social services extending back to the late 1950s. Some provinces have annual reports extending back very much earlier, and these merit future study. The calendar year 1959 and the fiscal year 1959/60 were chosen as the starting point for the systematic collection of data. The general outlines of child welfare services before 1959 were

sketched in from earlier fragmentary annual reports available in some provinces, from the Canada Year Books, and from census materials.

Demographic Developments and Child Welfare Services

Based on fragmentary early data, it seems reasonably certain that 40,000 children were in care during the 1930s and 1940s. Rather more than half of these children were in institutions of one kind or another.[2] By 1940 though "a decided trend from institutional to foster care" was noted.[3] In 1939 there were not less than 2,000 legal adoptions as well as "an unascertained number of agreements called adoptions"[4] taking place annually.

The child welfare services at the end of the 1950s were fairly well developed and distributed in most provinces. However, the distribution and delivery of services was very much better in some provinces than in others. Serious deficiencies were recognized by the provinces themselves in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec. In Newfoundland the child welfare services assumed a separate identity only after their separation from social assistance services as late as the early 1960s. In the rest of Canada the basic structure of services was in place, but the level of services and resources was acknowledged by provincial officials to be too low. Some provinces exercised highly centralized control, others were decentralized; in Ontario, for example, control was highly decentralized through more than 50 children's aid societies. From Ontario west, native children were probably being under-served. Generally there was a problem of getting enough adoption applicants, especially for Roman Catholic and native children. The range of placement resources was limited. The need for small group homes and assessment facilities was widely acknowledged. Staffing levels in some provinces were reported to be insufficient for the performance of statutory duties, and in other provinces did not permit preventive or protective work to be undertaken.

The calendar year 1959 marked the peak year of the post-war baby boom. There were 479,000 births and the highest ever number of babies under one year old in the country. At this stage it is reasonable to hypothesize that the increase in the number of children in care in the twenty year period 1940 to 1960 was to some extent a reflection of the general growth in the child population.[5]

Developments after 1959 continued earlier growth trends in the child welfare services, but must be set against a declining number of births. By 1973 for example there were 343,000 births annually, 136,000 less than there were in 1959. Though the number of births was declining, the number of illegitimate births climbed from 20,221 in 1959 to 35,588 in 1970, and then declined to 31,005 in 1973.[6]

In 1959/60 there were 52,120 children in care, of whom about 15,000 or 29 per cent were in institutions. There were also about 12,800 completed adoptions. The number of children in care had grown to 83,000 in 1966, and there were 16,400 completed adoptions. By 1970 there were 98,400 children in care and 20,300 completed adoptions. In 1977 the number of children in care had fallen to 78,400 and there were 16,400 completed adoptions.

Since the early 1970s the proportion of admissions involving children of unmarried parents has fallen and consequently the proportion of children admitted for reasons of protection or neglect has risen. At the same time the number of admissions looked at over the space of 15 to 20 years has steadily risen. The same trend holds true in terms of the proportion of the relevant age groups involved.

We can begin to relate the overall population change to changes in the child welfare population and to what the child welfare services are doing. In the early 1960s the child welfare services had already experienced continuous growth in their work for a number of years. Provincial annual reports of this period speak of a lack of resources, of an inability to perform statutory duties, of older more difficult children in care, of a need for more foster homes, more group homes and more adoption applicants.[7]

These pressures were one of the factors that led to the creation in 1966 of the federal, cost-sharing Canada Assistance Plan. The lack of facilities

and the low foster care rates, for example were a recurrent refrain of the provincial annual reports in the early 1960s. The federal Canada Assistance Plan came just in time to relieve some of the pressures on the provincial child welfare services. Most provincial governments responded by hiring more staff and reorganizing their services.

Basically what these trends appear to mean is that while the increase in number of admissions and children in care up to 1971 can be explained in terms of population growth and service expansion, since then continued increase in number and activities is a reflection of service expansion and a change in service emphasis with proportionately more children entering care for reasons of protection and parental neglect.

Residential Care

The role of institutional or residential care of children in Canada has not as yet been adequately studied. Almost thirty per cent of children in care were living in what were designated as institutions or residential homes in 1959/60. Though there have been a number of changes which affect this sector of care, some 18,200 children or 23 per cent of all children in care were located in institutional or residential type services in 1976/77. This figure probably understates the number of children living in these types of facilities by excluding institutions which do not fall under child welfare auspices. (Table 1)

Foster Care

It was, however, foster homes which took the bulk of children entering care during the 1960s and early 1970s. From 1963/64 to 1973/74 foster homes cared for more than 60 per cent of children in care at any one time, 70 per cent in 1966/67. The number of children in foster homes rose from 28,605 in 1959/60 to 65,139 in 1969/70 and fell to 44,849 in 1976/77. Under pressure the child welfare services turned to the placement resource which was most readily available and most economical. (Table 1)

TABLE 1

LOCATION OF CHILDREN IN CARE (IN THOUSANDS) IN 1961/62, 1966/67, 1971/72 & 1976/77

	FAMILY TYPE HOMES										RESIDENTIAL SERVICES						OTHER LOCATIONS		TOTAL	
	FOSTER HOMES		BOARDING HOMES		FREE HOMES/ RELATIVES		ADOPTION HOMES		SUB TOTAL		INSTITUTIONS		GROUP HOMES		SUB TOTAL					
	No.		No.		No.		No.		No.		No.		No.		No.		No.		No.	
1961/62	33.2	57%	0.5	1%	1.5	3%	4.6	8%	39.8	69%	16.5	29%	0.1	-	16.6	29%	1.3	2%	57.9	100.00%
1966/67	58.4	70%	0.7	1%	1.4	2%	6.2	7%	66.7	80%	13.7	16%	0.7	1%	14.3	17%	2.2	3%	83.3	100.00%
1971/72	58.5	64%	0.4	-	3.9	5%	6.7	7%	69.5	76%	17.4	19%	1.4	2%	18.8	20%	3.2	4%	91.5	100.00%
1976/77	44.8	57%	0.4	1%	6.2	8%	6.3	8%	57.7	74%	16.3	21%	1.8	2%	18.2	23%	2.5	3%	78.4	100.00%

Though foster care rates improved after 1966, the provincial annual reports still expressed concern about the supply of foster parents. The debt of gratitude owed to foster parents was also frequently mentioned. What was less often mentioned during the 1960s, but has been discussed more during the 1970s was the question of standards. How do we explain the change? It is important to recognize the nature of the constraints on the child welfare services. The demand for foster homes during the 1960s does seem to have elicited an increased supply of homes, yet contemporary comments on the situation indicate that maintenance rates were not high enough. How then was the supply increased? In accepting and using the available foster homes, were the child welfare services taking whatever was available to them? What is it, for example, about child welfare services that always conveys a sense of strain, a sense of crisis? There are obviously real anxieties for people involved in trying to provide adequately for abused and neglected children. But one must also recognize the context in which this work has to be performed. There is little reason to doubt that the absolute lack of resources was a serious problem for the child welfare services in the early and late 1960s. We hear similar concerns expressed during the early 1980s. Again demands seem to exceed resources.

The average age of children in care has tended to rise partly as a consequence of fewer very young children being relinquished for adoption, and partly perhaps because the general child population has been aging. Child welfare services have become responsible in many provinces for delinquents who are older children and who thus tend to push the average age of children in care upwards. It is perhaps not surprising that both foster parents and social workers report how difficult it is to care for these older, often delinquent and disturbed, children. The sentiments echo those expressed in the provincial annual reports of the 1960s.

A number of factors, not all dealt with here, are likely to combine to reduce the number of people willing to be foster parents. Foster children are often not young children; they are often adolescents and for this reason

alone, if not for others, are more difficult to care for. Maintenance rates continue to be modest despite moves to call some homes "special" or "therapeutic". Child welfare services have in recent years drawn up more elaborate regulations in efforts to raise standards, and enforcement of these along with considerable public interest may deter some would be foster parents and discourage some existing foster parents from continuing. There are other social trends which may affect recruitment and retention of foster parents. Some foster parents find the provision of family day care services instead of foster care both personally and financially more rewarding and much more convenient. In any case the general increase in labour force participation by women may serve to deplete the stock of potential foster parents. Finally many modern homes do not lend themselves to the care of foster children.

Adoption Services

After residential care and foster homes, adoption homes are the other major placement resource of the child welfare services, (if children's own homes are discounted). The association between adoptions and the child welfare services has in many ways become less strong in recent years. A minority of adoptions now are the result of agency placements. Instead adoptions by stepparents and relatives have become numerically most important. Adoption is a simple term for an increasingly complex social institution. Though the rise and fall in the number of adoptions tends to mirror the rise and fall in the number of illegitimate births, the one is not simply a reflection of the other. Despite a drop in the number of adoptions in recent years proportionately more children are now being adopted than in the early 1960s. The child welfare services made strenuous efforts to secure adoption applicants. In doing so they helped to popularize the institution of adoption itself. (Table 2)

TABLE 2

ADOPTION COMPLETIONS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE CHILD POPULATION AGED UNDER ONE YEAR, AND UNDER FIVE YEARS IN THE PERIOD 1959/60 TO 1976/77

YEAR	A	B	C	D	E
	No. of Completed adoptions (thousands)	All Children under 1 year (thousands)	All Children under 5 years (thousands)	A as % of B	A as % of C
1961/62	13.7	475.7	2256.4	2.88	0.61
1966/67	17.1	387.7	2197.4	4.41	0.78
1971/72	20.2	360.3	1816.2	5.61	1.11
1976/77	16.4	347.7	1732.0	4.67	0.94

A change from scarcity to surplus, possibly a result of economic factors, occurred in the number of people applying to be adoptive parents.[8] Just as foster homes were in scarce supply in the early 1960s so were adoption applicants, and especially for children belonging to particular religious and/or ethnic groups. One of the reasons for recent developments is the decline in the number of illegitimate births after 1970, bur another is the increasing proportion of unmarried mothers choosing to keep their babies.

Child Welfare Expenditures and Resources

Federal contributions to the child welfare services have declined in terms of 1971 constant dollars.[9] Although this decline is partly explicable in terms of the number of children in care at any one time, it is not explicable in terms of the overall level of activity in the child welfare services. Taking the four census years 1961/62, 1966/67, 1971/72 and 1976/77, the number of admissions to care has risen steadily, and the general level of activity measured in terms of admissions, discharges and children in care has also risen. (Tables 3,4,5)

TABLE 3

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ADMITTED, DISCHARGED, AND IN CARE IN 1961/62, 1966/67, 1971/72 + 1976/77

	A Admissions	B Discharges	C A + B	D Children in Care	C as % of D
1961/62	22605	19652	42257	57850	73.05
1966/67	34099	32331	66430	83279	79.77
1971/72	35637	41633	77270	91479	84.47
1976/77	37604	37343	74947	80525	93.07

TABLE 4

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE COMPARED WITH THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE AT THE END OF 1961/62, 1966/67, 1971/72 + 1976/77

	A Children in Care During Year	B Children in Care at Year End	A as % of B
1961/62	75457	57850	130.44
1966/67	114192	83279	137.12
1971/72	131563	91479	143.82
1976/77	117976	80525	146.51

TABLE 5

THE CHILD POPULATION OF CANADA (EXCLUSIVE OF THE NORTH WEST TERRITORIES AND THE YUKON) AGED 0-14 yrs. INCLUSIVE AND 0-19 yrs. INCLUSIVE COMPARED WITH THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEARS 1961/62, 1966/67, 1971/72 and 1976/77.

	A Population 0-14 years Inclusive (Thousands)	B Population 0-19 years Inclusive (Thousands)	C Children in Care at End of Year (Thousands)	D C as % of A	E C as % of B
1961/62	6177.4	7607.5	57.8	0.94	0.76
1966/67	6574.1	8408.3	83.3	1.27	0.99
1971/72	6359.6	8469.6	91.5	1.44	1.08
1976/77	5896.2	8241.5	80.5	1.37	0.98

SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA VITAL STATISTICS AND PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES (various titles) ANNUAL REPORTS.

For the provinces which produced fairly full staffing statistics it can be seen that the numbers of staff have also risen, as have the number of beds for children in homes for special care. In the ten year period from 1967 to 1977 the rise in the number of beds was 64 per cent. Some of the expenditures for these homes is hidden in overall expenditures for homes for special care for adults and children. Given the relative decline in expenditures and the growth of expensive forms of residential provision, and despite some decline in the overall number of children admitted to care since the early 1970s it does not appear likely that any substantial added investment in foster care has been made. Yet as Parker pointed out some years ago foster care, along with adoption, enjoys the happy advantage of being the cheapest and best form of substitute care.[10]

The Why, How and What Questions

This discussion of the main findings of the child welfare services has so far left out any mention of prevention and protection services, that is those other activities of the child welfare services which do not directly involve children being admitted to and discharged from care. If one were to devise a hierarchy of involvement for the child welfare services, prevention and protection services would, despite their importance, come near the bottom simply because the intensity and/or duration of contact is less than for the in-care services.

Ontario statistics discussed below show a considerable growth in work with children who are never formally admitted to care; this partly explains why by comparison with most other provinces the proportion of children in care has tended to remain low during the past twenty years. At the same time the proportion of children admitted to care in Ontario who have previously received protection services in their own homes represents now about three quarters of all children admitted to care.

Leaving a child in its own home after neglect or abuse has been suspected or detected involves some risks. At the very least on subsequent admission such

a child will be older and may be harder to help. The present study was not designed to answer why and how children are admitted to care, and what happens to children during and after care. These questions are immensely important, and require constant study. It may suffice to say that all types of child welfare intervention involve risks, and it behooves us to make these risks explicit.

What the present study's findings may provide is a framework or baseline by which to judge some of the broader, long-term trends in the child welfare services.

Looked at in a static way, the child welfare services were faced with the biggest demand for services in the last 1960s, when the number of children in care coincided with the general child population aged 0-19 years being at its highest level and with the number of illegitimate births, also being at the highest point ever. The growth in the number of children admitted to care was 42.3 per cent between 1961/62 and 1966/67, 4.4 per cent between 1966/67 and 1971/72, and 7.1 per cent between 1971/72 and 1976/77. The bulk of the increased demand thus came in the early sixties. (See Table 1) But the number of admissions continued to rise throughout the period.

Most provincial child welfare services reported in their annual reports the steady increase in demand for their services, and some, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, indicated that their resources were so strained that they could not discharge even basic statutory duties, while most others reported difficulties in recruiting foster and adoptive parents.

The implementation of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966 provided some much needed relief. In Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, for example the creation of more professional child welfare positions was reported in annual reports. In Ontario unpublished statistics show there was a 30 per cent increase in the number of social work positions between 1966 and 1971, a continuation of a trend apparent from 1960 onwards. In Saskatchewan official government estimates show there was no growth in the total number of positions in the Department of

Social Services between 1966 and 1971, but rapid growth thereafter. Although the Canada Assistance Plan has provided more resources for the development of provincial social services, these examples serve to show that the effect was not necessarily direct or immediate.[11] We are again forced to recognize that child welfare services are part of the political process at the provincial level, and pressure for change and improvement has to occur there.

It is apparent that the main impact of the Canada Assistance Plan came when the demographic pressures on the child welfare services were already easing. The number of children aged 0-14 years was 12 per cent less in 1977 than in 1967. During the same period the number of beds in children's homes rated for cost-sharing rose by some 64 per cent; this rise may not entirely reflect new resources, but it does suggest greater flexibility in terms of placement resources than was previously possible.

We have then a situation in which the child welfare services expanded their resources when the child population was already declining. The constituents of the demands on the services were changing. The number of illegitimate births declined after 1970. A lower proportion of admissions to care involved children relinquished for adoptions or children of unmarried mothers. Not surprisingly the proportion of children admitted for reasons of neglect or protection also rose. The average age of children in care was also higher.

Increased resources in the form of adoption homes, foster homes, residential facilities and more staff, (partly a result of the Canada Assistance Plan), coincided with the overall decline in the child population aged 0-19 years after 1969. There was thus some opportunity to redeploy resources, and engage in activities which were previously not possible. More emphasis for example was placed on placement for adoption of children with special needs. The overall increase in the level of activities in the in-care services, and the decrease in the number of children in care suggests briefer periods were being spent in care perhaps on a more planned basis.

Preventive Services

As indicated above one strategy for limiting or reducing demands on the in-care services during the 1960s was development of prevention or protection services. The statistical and descriptive material on these services is somewhat fragmentary.

What do the preventive services, variously named protection and family services do? Generally these services deal with children and families at risk -- that is situations in which neglect and/or abuse may ultimately lead to the children being admitted to care. One primary objective is to prevent this eventuality. These services have a double function then of preventing a child coming into care, but also of bringing him in early enough if the need arises. This ambiguous function clearly holds some risks, the justification for the provision of the service being a presumption that the child is already neglected or abused.

A linkage between protection and in-care services is shown in the unpublished Ontario protection statistics. In the period 1960 to 1977 the number of children who received protection services before transfer to the 'in-care' services rose from 3,700 to 8,450 and as a percentage of admissions to care went from 49 to 72 per cent. At the same time the total number of open cases was 18,700 involving 53,000 children in 1960, 29,900 cases involving 82,300 children in 1969 and 37,300 cases involving 88,200 children in 1977. An analysis of new and reopened protection cases shows that the average number of children involved in each case is consistently higher than the average for all families in Ontario and Canada for the years 1961, 1966, 1971 and 1976. In other words children receiving protection services appear to come from larger families. At the same time the average number of children involved in reopened protective cases is consistently higher than that for new cases.

The linkage between Ontario's protection and in-care services suggests that for many children admission to care is a slow process, various alternatives to admission being tried first. If this is indeed the case the presenting

problems within a child's family are likely to be of a chronic rather than an acute kind, and the actual size of the family may have something to do with why neglect occurs.

British Columbia provides a more detailed breakdown of the reasons why children are admitted to care. Parental failure, neglect, desertion, illness and inability to provide treatment, education and training are the main contributory factors given. Physical abuse was the reason given for less than three per cent of admissions in 1976/77.

There has been an increase in the number of cases receiving preventive family services in British Columbia in the period 1966/67 to 1976/77, but changes in record keeping make the interpretation of the statistics difficult. A similar situation obtains in Nova Scotia and other provinces. The available statistics suggest a substantial rise in the number of protection cases since the early and mid-sixties, probably a reflection of the increased resources made available to the child welfare services by the Canada Assistance Plan.

A number of provinces record the development of preventive services such as child day care, homemaker and nutritional programs, but do not directly link them with the child welfare services. It is however apparent that some of these programs are being provided under the Canada Assistance Plan to people in economic need. The direct evidence linking poverty and child neglect is not spelt out in provincial records. However a pattern of cumulative disadvantage is suggested. The protection services make a variety of efforts to counter this disadvantage. Native children, who are very much overrepresented in the in-care population, some one-quarter of all children in care, are one example where the absence of appropriate effective support services makes reversal of the disadvantage impossible.

Some British research has suggested that the number of applications for admissions to care varies considerably from one local government authority to another, and in turn the proportion of this number that are refused also varies

considerably. Authorities with a low rate of applications have a high rate of refusals, a low rate of admissions, a low rate of discharges and a low proportion of the child population in care.[12]

Similar variations are apparent in Canada, but some of the more detailed information on the rates of applications and refusal is not available. Generally a higher proportion of the child population aged 0-14 years or 0-19 years was in care in 1976/77 than in 1961/62. In most provinces the populations rose to a high point in 1971/72 and then fell to a point at about the 1966/67 level. (Table 5) It is interesting to note that Ontario had a lower percentage of the child population in care in 1976/77 than in the three previous census years 1961/62, 1966/67 and 1971/72. In other words Ontario had found some way of reducing the number of children actually staying in care. The growth of its protection services and the nature of its service delivery system would seem to provide the most logical explanation. The relative density of the service system may provide a fairly good way of rationing the delivery of the child welfare services, or at least of containing demands.

Limitations of Traditional Approaches

As indicated earlier the present study was not designed to answer the 'why' 'how' and 'what' questions in the child welfare services. The demographic trends provide some explanation why the child welfare services encountered growing demands for services until 1970. The efforts to contain these demands led to an increased emphasis on adoption as a placement resource. At the same time adoption began to reflect other trends and changes in society.

Two factors appear to be affecting trends in adoption, the increased tendency for unmarried mothers to keep their babies and the rise in the number of divorces and remarriages, and both of these factors also mean that children are likely to be older at the time of adoption. While fewer unmarried mothers have relinquished their babies for adoption in recent years, it is likely that a high proportion of these mothers have always been strongly motivated to keep

their babies. Improvement in social assistance rates and perhaps greater willingness to live in common-law arrangements have permitted more unmarried mothers to keep their babies. There are many factors intertwined in this situation, which warrant much further investigation.

A large part of child welfare work was thus found to involve the children of unmarried mothers. In addition the reason why many children enter care may be linked to marriage breakdown as well as a wide range of social, psychological and economic factors. It becomes necessary to focus on the burdens placed on single parent families, if prevention is to become anything more than a bandaid attempt to stop or delay children coming into care. Child welfare services must then be placed in their organizational and jurisdictional context, so that alternative strategies and policies can be explored.

An increasingly number of foster homes and residential places were sought during the 1960s. Foster homes in particular expanded in number to accommodate the bulge in the in-care population. Increased maintenance payments may have helped the recruitment of more foster homes. The overall number of residential places also increased, and the size of these establishments fell. As pressure on the services eased, more emphasis was placed on standards, on protection services and other alternatives to "in-care" services.

In another sense though the pressures have not eased. Fiscal constraint and inflation have made the operation of the enlarged child welfare services more difficult. The public concern about child abuse has focussed attention on the very real remaining deficiencies of the services. What happens to children in their own homes and what happens to them when they are the clients of the child welfare services have come to seem very closely related questions.

What is also apparent is that traditional categorical approaches to the problems of child neglect are at best palliative measures. The isolation of the child welfare services from other highly relevant services such as income assistance, public health services, child day care and so on is a very real

problem. Whether the massive institutional reform of our social institutions has led to better services for children and families is not clear. The traditional child welfare services still appear to be an after the fact, rescue service, and even the emphasis on preventive services involves risks for children.

Conclusions

The present study has sought to put the child welfare services in a wider social and demographic framework. The relevance of this framework may be briefly summarized. A peak in the total Canadian child population in the early 1960s coincided with unprecedented demands on the child welfare services. These demands continued to grow as illegitimate births increased; they fell to some degree as illegitimate births fell in the early 1970s.

In the meantime there were a number of consequent and coincidental developments, which in turn have exerted an influence on the child welfare services. Child welfare personnel and resources grew. Foster parents rose in number as the demand for homes increased, but fell as the number of children in care fell. They were in an economist's terms in a state of elastic supply. Residential or institutional resources also increased, but have shown no corresponding decrease in recent years.

Generally even though the number of children in care has fallen, the levels of activity in the child welfare services, that is the numbers of children receiving protective services, or being admitted to, or discharged from care, have risen steadily during the last twenty years. The best explanation of, or hypothesis for, this continued increase in activity would seem likely to be the growth in the size of the child welfare services. Restraint in expenditures in recent years does not seem to have reduced the services to the size experienced during the 1960s. To some extent also the child welfare services have assumed additional responsibilities for delinquent and handicapped children.

Although the challenges facing the child welfare services in the 1980s are very serious, the present study would suggest that similar challenges have been experienced in the past. In the early 1960s as today there was a problem in trying to care for the increasing number of older disturbed children.

If there has been considerable continuity in the child welfare services during a twenty year period (the historical materials suggest continuity over an even longer period), we are left asking whether there are no real alternatives to these traditional, after the fact, rescue services.[13] The purpose of the present study is in the last analysis to place the private tragedies of child neglect and abuse in their wide societal context. It is sometimes incumbent on social workers to look for solutions not in reordered private lives, but in a reordered society. If the study reported here has succeeded even a little in throwing light on a baffling social problem, we may have come a little nearer to preventing child neglect. The "intimate environments of childhood"[14] thus require a broad perspective for their understanding. "When we understand social structures and structural changes as they bear upon more intimate scenes and experiences, we are able to understand the causes of individual conduct and feelings of which men in specific milieux are themselves unaware."[15]